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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

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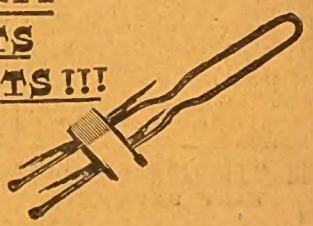

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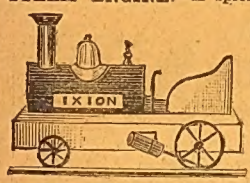

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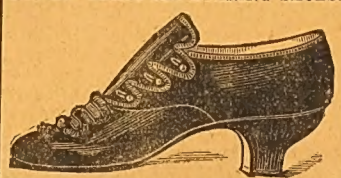

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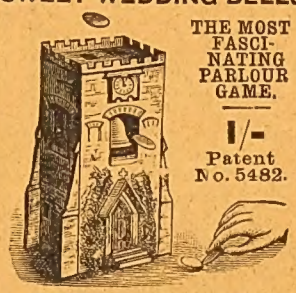

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 312.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 22, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

THE REVENGE OF LUIGI SFORZA

"HATE, jealousy—pooh, my dear sir, why you don't even know what they're like under those cold suns and fog-laden skies of yours. It is only here in the South, where the hot sun gets into our blood and brain and sets our very souls on fire, that such things are really known. Why I could tell you a story that happened not very long ago in Naples yonder, that would show you how an Italian can love and hate, and how his jealousy, when once aroused, can make him forget even his love in his hate, and change him into something worse than a wild beast; for I can tell you that the fiercest of wild beasts is like a tame dog compared with an Italian whose love has turned through jealousy to hate."

We were standing on the promenade deck of the North German liner *Baiern* as she steamed out of the Bay of Naples, watching the town lamps flash up out of the light haze which lay over the town, and the lazy smoke-cloud of Vesuvius changing to all sorts of strange colours in the level rays of the setting sun. I was an Englishman doing the usual globe trot, and my companion was a well-bred Italian of about five-and-thirty, whom I had met at one of the clubs to which I had an introduction, and who happened to be going out to Ismailia by the same steamer in which I was going to Colombo.

"Well," I said, "I am ready enough to be convinced, and still more ready to hear the story, so, as it is too early to turn in, and as we don't know a soul on board, save each other, yet, how would it be if you passed the time in telling the story, and I in listening and being convinced?"

"Very good," he replied. "Story-telling is, after all, more interesting than argument, especially when the story is one from real life, as this is, for I can tell you it caused a tremendous sensation in Naples at the time that the drama really occurred. I know the circumstances well, too, so far as they are known, and far better than the reporters of the newspapers or even the police officials got to know them, for all the characters were known to me personally, and the heroine was one of my dead wife's dearest friends."

"The police officials!" I echoed. "So then, of course, there is a crime in the story."

"A crime!" he said, with a laugh that at the time I thought strangely savage and bitter. "Yes, there was a crime—a crime so cunningly conceived and so ruthlessly carried out that I think only an Italian, and a Neapolitan at that, could have imagined and executed it.

"In telling the story to you, a stranger," he continued, leaning over the rail and flicking the ash of his cigar into the swirling bubbles that were drifting past the side of the moving ship, "I need only call the characters by their Christian names. It will be simpler, and serve the purpose quite as well, without needlessly going into family particulars which there is no reason to talk about. There were only three characters in the drama—two men and a woman; but, as you

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will see, quite enough to make a tragedy. The woman's name was Francesca, and the men's were Cosmo and Luigi.

"Of Francesca it will be enough to say that she was young, well-born, and beautiful—yes, beautiful as you could imagine one of the angels of heaven would be incarnated in a human form. Cosmo and Luigi were also young and well-born and, for Italians, rich. Cosmo was a fine, tall, handsome fellow, with blue eyes and fair brown hair, for you will have seen enough of Italy by this time to know that all Italians are not dark; but Luigi was dark, with black hair and eyes, strong and a man of good presence, though not so tall as Cosmo by a good inch.

"I suppose it will hardly be necessary for me to tell you that both of them were in love with Francesca, and that hence sprang the tragedy; but there was this difference between them—Luigi had grown up with Francesca almost from childhood, and so, too, he had grown up with his love for her till it had become as much a part of his life as the very blood that warmed his veins. Cosmo was a Roman whose acquaintance Luigi had made in the Eternal City, and whom he had himself introduced to Francesca a little over a year before the tragedy took place.

"It was soon after this that Luigi, suspecting nothing and as full of high hopes as he was of love, finally declared his passion to Francesca, and asked her in return to give him the love that he had always believed would one day crown his life with delight. I can well imagine, and so can you, northerner though you are, the blackness of the gulf of rage and despair into which the heaven of his expectations changed when Francesca, with tears in her eyes and a sob of real sorrow in her voice, told him that he had mistaken friendship for love, and that the affection she had for him as the friend of her family and the companion of her girlhood could never be called by a warmer name.

In vain he pleaded his hopeless cause.

"It was in vain that he pleaded his hopeless cause with all the burning eloquence that his passion lent him, in vain that he besought her on his knees to tell him that the fate her lips had spoken was not final, that now she knew he had loved her long and deeply she might permit him still to woo her as a lover in the hope that love might beget love.

"But it was all of no avail. Francesca heard him to the end, and then told him, gently and kindly, but with a firmness that struck a chill of despair to his heart, that she could not permit him to hope where she knew there was no hope, and then Luigi rose to his feet, his love changed to unreasoning anger and his pleading into reproach, and told her that she had played with his heart for years and now that it was laid at her feet spurned it aside as a toy that had ceased to interest her. He swore that she had loved him, though she refused to admit it now, that she had wantonly given away to another the love that had been his, and should have been his to the end; and, when she turned on him and dismissed him in the wrath of her wounded pride, he swore that he would find the man who had robbed him of the fruition of all his dearest hopes, and take a revenge worthy of the wrong that had been done him.

"Then he left her with his evil words ringing ominously in her ears, and the next day she heard that he had left Naples to spend the winter wandering about the Eastern Mediterranean. From Athens he wrote her a long penitent letter, imploring her to forgive and forget the foolish words that the violence of his passionate despair had forced him to utter in her presence, and to think of him once more as her old friend and playmate, and as a man who was trying to live down his hopeless love and make himself worthy still to be her friend.

"The letter produced the effect that he had hoped and expected it would, for Francesca's anger had soon melted into pity, when she came to think how fearful a thing it must be for a man to love and hope for so many years and then to hear the voice of the woman he loves pronouncing the death-sentence of all his dearest hopes; so she wrote back assuring him of the forgiveness he asked for, and telling him that by the time he came back to Naples both of them must have forgotten the only angry words that had ever marred their friendship, and that they would be to each other as though these words had never been spoken.

"Whatever apprehensions she may have had on the score of sincere contrition were quite dispelled by Luigi's next letter, which bore not a trace of malice or resentment, and even contained a generously worded message, which he bade her give to his fortunate rival, telling him that, since he had now no hope of winning the prize himself, he was well pleased to hear that it had fallen into the hands of the man whom he thought most worthy to win it. Two months later, he returned to Naples, and his first act was to cordially felicitate both Cosmo and Francesca, who were now betrothed and were to be married in little less than a year. The months passed quickly, and so perfectly did Luigi conceal the inward passion that was consuming him that both Cosmo and Francesca, so far from suspecting that he had any designs upon their happiness, looked upon him as the closest of their friends.

"At length, only a few weeks before their marriage was to have taken place, Luigi's long waited opportunity came. Cosmo, who owned a large property in Sicily, found himself obliged to pay a visit to the island to make certain arrangements in connection with the marriage settlements. He went to Messina, and from thence to Palermo, and there, after a fortnight's absence in all, he disappeared. Not a trace of him or a clue of his whereabouts remained. He had been engaged nearly all one day with his lawyers and the agents of his estate, he had gone to bed in a hunting lodge on his estate, and the next morning he had vanished.

"There is no need for me to tell you of Francesca's sorrow and despair at this sudden and mysterious shadow that had fallen over the bright promise of her life; but, great as was her suffering then, it was as nothing in comparison with the agony that was to follow. Of all her family and friends none seemed to sympathise more heartily or to feel more deeply for her than the man whom she had rejected in favour of her missing lover.

"As soon as it was certain that Cosmo's disappearance could not be explained without supposing that he had been the victim of foul play, he went to Sicily and did all that money and industry could do to trace the missing man; but after ten weeks of constant searching he returned to say that he had failed and that there could no longer be any doubt but that Cosmo had either voluntarily fled for reasons of his own, or had

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been slain by some unknown hand for some equally unknown purpose.

"As far as appearances went one of these two seemed the only possible explanation, and yet in a few days both were proved to be false by a letter, bearing the Palermo post-mark and addressed to Francesca. It told her in just so many words that Cosmo was still alive, but that he was dead so far as she was concerned. If she wished to save him from a fate worse than death she must marry one who had loved her longer and better than ever Cosmo had done. The writer would wait a month for the publication of the news of her marriage in the Neapolitan papers. If it did not appear a further communication would be sent.

"No name was mentioned in the letter, and there was no signature to it; but it had the effect of plunging Francesca still deeper into sorrow and despair, and sending Luigi once more to Sicily on a second search that proved as fruitless as the first. The month passed, and of course the news of the wedding did not appear. Two or three days later, Francesca received a little oblong box bearing the Messina post-mark. She opened it with trembling hands, looked into it, and then, with a low wailing scream sank senseless to the floor. Her mother, who was in the room with her, summoned assistance and then looked into the box. It contained a man's forefinger cut off close to the hand and a slip of paper promising another similar communication in a month if the marriage advised by the writer had not taken place.

"I know it will be no use for me to try and tell you how great was the horror produced by this dreadful message. But, saving Francesca herself, no one seemed so deeply affected by it as Luigi. There could be no doubt but that he was the man whom the unknown sender of the summons ordered Francesca to marry under a penalty as unheard of as it was horrible, and equally there was no doubt as to whose finger it was that lay in the box. Still there was not a jot of evidence to connect Luigi with the hideous crime that was being perpetrated in some unknown spot.

"Though the details were, of course, kept private, the matter had been in the hands of the police from the beginning, and both the Italian and Sicilian police agents—detectives as you call them in England—had been using every effort to trace the unhappy man who was evidently the victim of as diabolical a conspiracy as a human brain had ever conceived.

"The second month passed, and then came a little square box addressed to Francesca, but this time bearing the Roman post-mark. Her father had given orders that all her letters were to be brought to him first, so he received the box and opened it. It contained a man's left ear and a slip of paper intimating that the right one would follow in another month, unless the marriage had taken place. The box and its contents were sent to the police, who redoubled their efforts, but still without avail.

"Francesca's father then appealed most solemnly to Luigi to confess privately to him if he had any hand in the horrible business, pledging his oath to let him escape scot free if Cosmo were set at liberty. But Luigi passionately repudiated the aspersion, and volunteered to go before the Judge of Instruction and submit to any examination as to his doings and whereabouts during the whole period. He called Heaven and all its saints to witness that, not only was he innocent of any complicity in the crime of the unknown miscreant, but he would willingly give his whole fortune to bring him to justice, and set Cosmo free to save Francesca from the slow death she was now dying from sorrow and horror.

"As for the suggestion that Francesca should marry him to save Cosmo, he declared that nothing would make him a party to such a hideous contract. Much as he had loved her and still respected and pitied her, he would rather follow her to the grave than lead her to the altar under such awful circumstances. After this there was of course nothing more to be said against him, for Francesca had never told anyone of his threat to be avenged on her and the man who had made his suit hopeless, and even she had forgotten it in the agony and perplexity of the hour.

"So the third month passed, and in due course the threat was mercilessly fulfilled. The right ear came in a box from Genoa, accompanied by precisely the same warning as before, saving only that the souvenir was to be of necessity varied next time. As far as was possible these latest horrors had been kept from Francesca, but it availed little, for she guessed that the threat of the first letter was being fulfilled, and the torture of her uncertainty was as great as that of knowledge would have been.

"At length, unable to bear it any longer she contrived to meet Luigi alone one day and implored him to tell her the truth. They happened to be in the same room in which she had refused his first and only offer of love. For some time he held out, but at last yielded to her supplications and told her all. Then, beside herself with the torment that she could no longer bear, she flung herself at his feet, almost on the same spot in which he had knelt at hers, and besought him to end her agony and save Cosmo by marrying her.

"No jealous lover's revenge was ever more complete than his was now, and yet he was not satisfied with it. He raised her from the ground and with tears in his eyes implored her to think of all that such a horrible sacrifice meant for them both, and for Cosmo too, even though it should rescue him from a fate which, hideous as it was, he would rather endure than escape it at such a price. In the end he succeeded in persuading her to wait yet another month, promising that if no deliverance came by that time he would place himself unreservedly in the hands of her parents and do whatever seemed best to them.

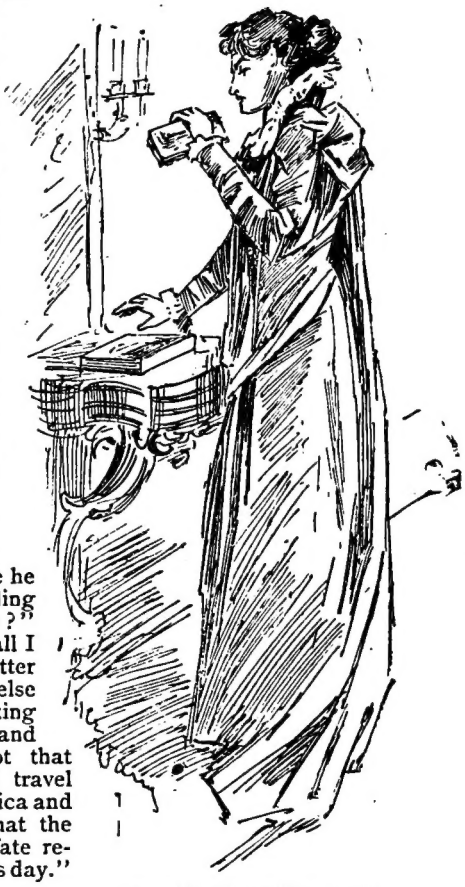
"Thus the fourth month passed, and on the very day that Luigi was to put his case before Francesca's father and mother, there came another larger box, this time from Turin, and this, through the stupidity or corruption of a servant, got into Francesca's hands instead of her father's. She opened it and in it found, severed cleanly from the wrist, a hand that had often clasped her own, and still bearing on its third finger the the troth-ring she had given Cosmo in exchange for the one she was wearing herself.

"Half an hour later, Francesca's mother came into the room and found her laughing softly to herself and stroking the dead hand gently with her own. She was mad — hopelessly mad, and the marriage was now a legal impossibility.

"That is my story, Signor, what do you think of it?"

"Horrible!" I said. "Hideous, almost beyond belief; but surely you have not told it all? What became of Cosmo and Luigi? And was it ever proved that he had a hand in the ghastly business, as of course he must have had according to all the probabilities?"

"I have told you all I know, and for the matter of that, that anyone else knows," said he taking out a fresh cigar and lighting it, "except that Luigi went away to travel for two years in America and the far East, and that the mystery of Cosmo's fate remains a mystery to this day."



Opened it with trembling hands.

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Nearly two years had passed since I had said good-bye to my Italian acquaintance when he landed from the *Baiern* at Ismailia. I was sitting in the Café Ranieri in the Via Maria de Fiori in Rome, enjoying an after-dinner smoke and looking through the papers. I picked up the *Tribuna*, and as I opened the inside pages three or four staring head lines caught my eyes. One of them would have read in English:

"SOLUTION OF THE GREAT NEAPOLITAN MYSTERY."

And what follows here is a condensed translation of that portion of the report, filling nearly five columns of the *Tribuna*, which alone concerns the readers of the foregoing narrative:—

"Although all that was done had necessarily to be done with the strictest secrecy at the time, the police have now permitted the details of this extraordinary affair to be made public.

"It appears that Paolo Marini, after he had been sentenced to death for brigandage at Palermo, purchased the commutation of his sentence to penal servitude for fifteen years by giving the police information which led to the final breaking up of the band of the notorious Guiseppe Montani, who had for the last seven years been the terror of Palermo and its district. As is already known, Montani and the greater number of his followers fell under the bullets of the soldiers and gendarmerie, fighting desperately till the last, but still many were taken and paid the penalty of their crimes.

"In connection with this information, Paolo made a statement which at last clears up the mystery of that terrible tragedy which thrilled, not only Naples, but all Italy, about two and a half years ago. In spite of all his protestations of innocence and the entire absence of proof against him, Luigi Sforza was, as many have all along suspected, at the bottom of the vile conspiracy which wrecked the happiness of an honourable family, destroyed the reason of one of the fairest daughters of southern Italy, and ruthlessly sacrificed the life of one of its most promising sons.

"Luigi Sforza, strange as it may seem, was the foster-brother of the infamous Guiseppe Montani, and with him he hatched the horrible plot which, in one sense, succeeded all too well. Sforza's object was, of course, as is well known, revenge on the Signorina Francesca Cervigni and her family for the rejection of his suit, and on Signor Cosmo Tasselli for having, as he believed, supplanted him in her affections. Sforza advised Montani of Signor Tasselli's visit to Sicily, and he kidnapped him from his hunting-lodge on the night of his disappearance, carrying him off to one of his then unknown strongholds in the mountains.

Found her laughing softly to herself.

"Here he was kept while the first letter was sent, and when Sforza went to Sicily, ostensibly to search for him, a diabolical bargain was struck between the two scoundrels. Montani was to terrify the Signorina into a marriage with Sforza by the horrible and unheard of expedient of sending her portions of his unhappy victim's body coupled with threats to continue the mutilation till she consented to sacrifice herself. In order to baffle inquiries these ghastly fragments were sent through the post from various towns by the bandit's agents.

"Montani's price for this hideous work was to be the half of a very large fortune which the Signorina Francesca's only uncle had made in South America and left to her in trust, to be paid over to her on her wedding day provided she married with her father's consent. It has since been learnt that this portion of the plot would also have succeeded but for the insatiable thirst for vengeance which made Sforza overreach himself at the last moment, for the Signorina had actually yielded and consented to the unnatural marriage, but Sforza, then believing himself safe, preferred, with literally inhuman malice, to prolong her agony for another month.

"At the end of this time, and a day or so earlier than Sforza expected, the last of the horrible packages fell into the Signorina's hands by mistake, and under the horror of the sight of what it contained she became hopelessly insane. She was now, of course, incapable of both marriage and inheritance, and so the second part of the plot fell through. Montani then killed Signor Tasselli in a fit of fury, and several months afterwards he inveigled Sforza to Sicily on pretence of letting him still further satisfy his vengeance by seeing his rival killed before his eyes.

"It seems meanwhile that remorse or fear had driven Sforza to drink, and one night in a fit of drunken foolishness he boasted to Montani that he could have married the Signorina a month before the final catastrophe, but he did not think she had been punished enough. The knowledge of how nearly he had gained an immense sum of money, and of the vindictive madness that had lost it to him, so infuriated the brigand, that the next day, when Sforza was sober, he tied him to a tree, and made his men put him to death by just the same torments that his victim had suffered. The miserable man was literally cut to pieces, member by member, and limb by limb, as long as a spark of life, or a thrill of feeling, remained in his body. No man ever conceived a viler crime than he did, but it is doubtful if any criminal was ever so terribly punished. We subjoin a portrait of him taken a little over two years ago."

I looked at the portrait, and recognised it as that of the chance acquaintance who had told me the story on the promenade deck of the *Baiern*.

PEARSON'S PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTFOLIO

OF

FOOTLIGHT FAVOURITES.

The Second Part will be Published on

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20th.

AND WILL BE

Twice as Good as Part I.

CONTENTS:

Miss Agnes Huntington: A Reminiscence of "Paul Jones."
Mr. Henry Irving as Matthias in "The Bells."
Miss Mimi St. Cyr: A Study.
Miss Ellaline Terriss as "Cinderella."
Miss Julia Neilson in "The Tempter."
Miss Jessie Preston as Little Jack Sheppard.
Madame Patti: A Study.
Miss Maude Adams in "The Marked Ball."
Miss Millie Hylton in "Don Juan."
Mr. Fred Storey in "Ruy Blas," and "Cinder-Ellen Up Too Late."
Miss Mary Ansell.
Miss Alice Lethbridge.
Mr. E. S. Willard in "The Middleman."
Madame Jane Hading.
Miss Janet Achurch.
Miss Marie Tempest as Manon.
Miss Loie Fuller as a Skirt Dancer.
Miss Moore in "Little Christopher Columbus."
Miss Billie Barlow as Little Boy Blue.

NOTE THIS:—Part I. was sold out almost on publication, and many would-be purchasers could not obtain a copy. Part II. will sell out even quicker. Order your copy now.

33 BEAUTIFUL PHOTOGRAPHS FOR SIXPENCE.

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"TWENTY POUNDS REWARD."

"I TELL you, sergeant, I had it when I entered the train. I particularly remember looking at the time as we left Cannon Street, because it was then eleven minutes past five, and I remarked to my neighbour that we were nearly four minutes late."

Mr. Joseph Horsfall, J.P., of 71, Leadenhall Street, and Highfield Court, Highfield, was manifestly excited. His face was flushed; his overcoat, in defiance of the penetrating November fog, was unfastened and thrown open. There was something positively pathetic in the anxiety with which his eyes travelled from his undecorated waistcoat to the perplexed countenances surrounding him.

He was the centre of a small group of officials—the station master, the booking clerk and a couple of porters—one of whom, catching sight of the sergeant of police passing the level crossing just below the station, had with commendable promptitude run out and stopped him.

The man in authority was already busy with his note-book.

"What about your fellow passengers, Mr. Horsfall?" he inquired, with his pencil poised in readiness to enter the reply. "Did you notice them at all?"

"Three of them were residents and season ticket holders—Mr. Brookes, of Caldwell, Mr. Denny, and Colonel Pierce. A gentleman with whom I have constantly travelled, though we are not personally acquainted, went on to Dorking."

"Mr. Beale, of that town," put in the station-master, "I noticed him when I opened your door, sir. He was the late mayor. Well, it can't be any of *them*."

The booking clerk murmured something about the prevalence of kleptomania among the upper classes, but nobody listened to him.

"And the others, sir?" the sergeant continued; "any females?"

"Dear me, no, Troyle; it was a smoking carriage. Let me think." Mr. Horsfall put his hand to his head. "There were two other passengers. They left the train at some intermediate station. One was a clergyman, and the other—yes—a young man who sat on my right. He *looked* like a gentleman."

"There's nothing more deceiving than looks," Mr. Troyle averred sententiously. "Now this young gentleman, what was he like?"

"Like any other young man, wore an overcoat and a silk hat."

"Clean shaved, perhaps."

"Oh, no, a small moustache, and an eyeglass like the rest."

"Now, Mr. Horsfall, if you please, a description of the stolen property. A gold 'Albert' chain, I think you said, without locket or seal. And the watch——"

"A valuable gold repeater, a very valuable watch indeed. It was the gift of a most esteemed client—a deceased client. It would be quite irreplaceable."

"Any monogram or crest?"

"Both crest and shield were on the reverse of the case, and two initials, with a date engraved inside."

"Then it won't be offered at the pawnshops. They'll probably pop the case into the melting pot, unless it is detained in hopes of a reward."

"I will offer the reward at once." Mr. Horsfall's voice literally shook with anxiety. "I would not on any consideration have that watch destroyed. It shall be advertised in all the London newspapers. 'Twenty pounds reward'—I will gladly give that sum for its recovery."

"That ought to fetch it," said the sergeant, thoughtfully. "I should like to have a go for the thief—always taking for granted that the watch was stolen; but perhaps as you are so keen on this particular bit of jewellery, it may be safer to advertise."

"There's just a chance of its turning up at Dorking," suggested the station-master, who had wired forward instructions to search the carriage. "That is the answer," he added, as his ear caught the sharp tinkle of the telegraph call from the inner office. The answer proved unsatisfactory: "Have made careful examination of No. 222. No trace of missing property."

"I shall advertise," said Mr. Horsfall, dejectedly. "I have no desire to prosecute the thief; I am only anxious for the restoration of my property. I would not lose that watch on any consideration. The late Lord Sprintham presented it to me with his own hands, and I will gladly pay twenty pounds for its return."

"Twenty pounds reward, and no questions asked," groaned the sergeant aside. "It's a regular premium to pickpockets. However, it isn't my business. If I might offer a suggestion, sir," he added aloud, "I should say put 'No further reward will be offered' in your advertisement, or the gentry as have the watch may stick to it till they run you up to a cool hundred."

"Certainly, Troyle, certainly; a very good idea of yours. I will add 'No further reward will be offered' to my advertisement, though for the gift of the late Lord Sprintham I should not grudge even a hundred pounds. I shall have time to telegraph the notice to the *Times* and *Standard* to-night. They know me."

Mr. Horsfall bustled away through the fog, bent on reaching the post office as quickly as possible.

In due time the advertisement appeared in all the principal papers:

"Twenty Pounds Reward.—Lost between Cannon Street Station and Highfield, in first-class smoking carriage of 5.8 p.m. train, a gold repeater watch, engraved with shield and crest; also a heavy Albert guard. Anyone bringing the same to Messrs. Horsfall & Quills, 71, Leadenhall Street, will receive the above. N.B.—No further reward will be offered."

Mr. Horsfall read the little paragraph with much satisfaction. He went to town fully expecting to return with Lord Sprintham's gift once more in his pocket, but, as the hours wore on without any tidings of the missing watch, he grew less cheerful and less sanguine.

The two following days only served to deepen his depression. His usual good temper deserted him, he was morose with his clients, and snubbed an inoffensive clerk for bringing up a card just as the senior partner was preparing to leave the office.

"I can't wait," Mr. Horsfall said testily, "tell the gentleman he can see Mr. Quills."

"I did say you were just going, sir, but the gentleman thought it would be all right when you saw this."

This was a visiting card, neatly engraved with the name of "The Rev. Athelstane Bede," and at one corner, in smaller type, "The Clergy House, King Street, St. Giles, Grosvenor Gallery Club." Attached was a cutting of the advertisement of the lost watch.

"Eh, what?" Mr. Horsfall was all attention. "Let me see, I shall have ten minutes to spare if I drive. Get me a hansom, Dixon, and show the gentleman in at once."

The Rev. Athelstane Bede was a thin care-worn man, below the average height, and with an unmistakable air of impecuniosity about him. His clothes were worn, and decidedly glossy about the knees and elbows. There were dark circles round his preternaturally bright eyes, and a hollowness about the sallow cheeks, which created an uncomfortable impression that the Rev. Athelstane Bede was insufficiently fed.

His manner, however, was admirable, and the quiet dignity with which he introduced himself did not fail to impress Mr. Horsfall, whose respect for the Church was only second to his reverence for the State.

"I come on behalf of a young parishioner of mine," began the visitor courteously. "I am sorry to detain you, Mr. Horsfall, but I need not trespass long upon your valuable time. I think this advertisement will explain my errand. You offer a handsome reward for the recovery of a watch."

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At this neat reminder, Mr. Horsfall took out his cheque-book.

"Yes," he answered with an air of satisfaction; "that watch you see was the gift of a valued friend, the late Lord Sprintham. The cheque has been filled in ever since the advertisement appeared." He tore off the slip of paper and stood with it in his hand. The clergyman unbuttoned his thin overcoat and drew from his pocket the watch and chain.

"You will be kind enough to give the crest and initials, Mr. Horsfall," he remarked with a pleasant smile. "Quite unnecessary, really; but as I am only a deputy in the matter, it is perhaps as well to observe the usual formalities."

"The crest is a hound, passant; the initials J.H., from G.O.V.S.; date, May 28th, 1887."

"Quite correct. I have much pleasure in restoring the gift of your esteemed friend. You will understand that, acting on behalf of another, I am not at liberty to refuse the advertised reward; but you may rest satisfied that the money falls into most deserving hands, and will be both gratefully acknowledged and wisely spent."

He pushed the watch gently across the table; his long thin fingers lingered over it as if they liked the touch of the smooth metal.

Mr. Horsfall folded the cheque and handed it politely to his visitor, with a few words of thanks. He glanced at the watch as he restored it to his pocket.

"You will excuse me, I am sure," he began; "but——"

"You are anxious to catch your train," said the clergyman as he pocketed the cheque. "I will not detain you."

The two men went downstairs together. As they reached the outer door, Mr. Horsfall turned towards his companion. "I should like to know—purely as a matter of curiosity, you understand, the little affair is a thing of the past now—but as a matter of curiosity, Mr. Bede, I should very much like to know *where* your young friend found my watch."

The Rev. Athelstane Bede hesitated for a moment, and looked hard at the elder man.

"Mr. Horsfall," he said suddenly, "your generosity in this matter inclines me to trust you, but an explanation would place me unreservedly in your hands. If I speak freely, have I your word, as a magistrate and a gentleman, that you make no attempt to take advantage of my information—that it shall, in short, remain a dead secret between us." Curiosity is a passion not wholly confined to the weaker sex. Mr. Horsfall readily gave the required promise.

"I am aware that I am about to give myself away," pursued the clergyman; "but with a man of your untarnished honour my secret will be safe, and to you I cannot lie. Your watch, Mr. Horsfall, was not *found*. It was stolen."

"Stolen!" gasped the magistrate. "Then Troyle was right."

"Deliberately stolen from your person," continued Bede, solemnly.

"By that young fellow who sat next the window?"

"By no young fellow—my sin shall not be imputed to an innocent man—I, Athelstane Bede, committed the theft. Hear me out, Mr. Horsfall; listen to the story of sore temptation before you judge the fallen sinner. I have laboured hard in the vineyard. I have not eaten the bread of idleness. I have allowed myself no luxuries. But my stipend is barely sufficient for the necessaries of life, and I meet with many who need help. I have given to the starving the money which should have been paid to my tradespeople. Bills accumulated. I was pressed for payment; my creditors would not be denied. Before me lay ruin and disgrace. I tried in vain to borrow money.

"When I entered your carriage last Monday evening I was in despair. You took out your watch. I saw its value, and the tempter assailed me. He whispered: 'Take it! A reward will be offered. You can claim it; pay your debt; save your reputation. It is doing evil that good may come. In the future you may save the sum, and return it anonymously through the post.' In my old 'Varsity days I had taken lessons in prestigiation, and had frequently, with the assistance of a friend, given entertainments for the benefit of various charities. My skill had not deserted me. I fell. Now you know all. Spurn me, despise me if you will. At least, I have not lied to you."

His eyes were fixed on the ground. Sorrow, remorse, shame, were depicted on his thin, worn face. Mr. Horsfall's kindly heart was touched.

"Upon my soul," he said, "I am very sorry for you, Mr. Bede. It must have been a great temptation, a very great temptation. We never know our weakness till it is put to the test. Bless me, I might have done the same thing myself! Had I been acquainted with the circumstances, I would gladly have lent you the money. Consider it as a loan, to be repaid when you are a rich man. It was an ingenious device, though. Really," his curiosity getting the better of his delicacy, "you must have had great practice at some time. You did it very cleverly. My overcoat was buttoned up, I remember."

"Had you worn half-a-dozen coats it would have made no difference. The method is unique."

"Most extraordinary—extraordinary!" murmured the old gentleman. "Really it makes one quite curious to know how it is done. I suppose, now, you would not—just to illustrate the principle——"

He stopped, rebuked by the sorrowful surprise and dignity visible in the clergyman's countenance.

"Beg your pardon, I'm sure. Quite forgot what I was saying. Pray think no more of it," stammered the abashed magistrate. "Good evening, Mr. Bede. I shall hope to meet you again under pleasanter circumstances. You must excuse me. I shall only have just time to catch my train. Good evening."

Mr. Horsfall hurried into the hansom, bidding the man drive quickly. He was rather late, and as they drew near the station he unfastened his overcoat to get the shilling ready for his fare. Fumbling in his waistcoat pocket for another sixpence he made a discovery which put all thoughts of returning to Highfield out of his head.

The newly recovered watch and chain were gone for the second time. Mr. Horsfall was fairly staggered. He leaned back in the cab breathing heavily, and could hardly gather voice on arriving at the station to send a porter for the police inspector.

Meanwhile the cabby, with the aid of another railway servant, made a careful examination of the hansom; but, of course, they found no trace of the late Lord Sprintham's token of friendship and esteem. Acting on the advice of the inspector, Mr. Horsfall had recourse to the nearest police-station, whence, after stating his case, he drove, accompanied by an officer, to King Street, St. Giles, first calling, however, at the office, whore they found the clergyman's card still lying on the table in Mr. Horsfall's private room.

The constable was inclined to consider the whole affair a plant.

"Likely as not there's no Clergy House in King Street, or, if there is, we shall hear that they don't know any one of the name of Bede."

But, as it happened, the constable was wrong. There was a Clergy House in King Street, easily to be recognised by the big brass plate on the door; and, to Mr. Horsfall's inquiries, the servant replied that Mr. Bede was expected back immediately. "Would not the gentlemen step inside and wait?"

Accordingly, Mr. Horsfall and the constable were conducted to the long bare-looking visitors' room.

There was a constant stir in the house. Bells rang, people came and went, voices without gave hurried directions. Presently the servant was heard explaining that a gentleman was waiting to see Mr. Bede; he "had not given any name; said that Mr. Bede would know him."

Then the door was flung open by a big muscular young man arrayed in clerical garb of the most correct cut and style.

"Sorry to keep you waiting," he began pleasantly, "I was obliged to go up West this afternoon, and have only just returned. It is about the School Board, is it not?" he added interrogatively, glancing from Mr. Horsfall to the constable.

"I think," hesitated the former, "that there is some mistake. It was for Mr. Bede I inquired."

"It is all right; my name is Bede."

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"The Rev. Athelstane Bede, the Clergy House, St. Giles, and the Grosvenor Gallery Club?"

"That is my address. What can I do for you?"

Mr. Horsfall looked despairingly at the policeman.

"It is quite a different person," he said helplessly. "There is not the least resemblance between the two gentlemen."

"Case of mistaken identity?" inquired the curate.

"Case of swindle, I think, sir," responded the constable. "I told the gentleman all along as 'ow it was a plant."

"I must beg you to accept my humblest apologies," protested Mr. Horsfall when he had explained the situation. "You see, I had not a moment's doubt as to the truth of the story. The man looked like a gentleman, and a clergyman too. How was I to suppose him to be an impostor? There was his card. I have it with me. You will notice that it bears your name and address."

"Ah! that is quite possible. I had the misfortune about three weeks ago to have my pocket picked. There were four or five cards in my letter case (this most probably is one of them); there were also, I regret to say, three five-pound notes, the numbers of which I had not taken. We are brothers in misfortune, and I am afraid, sir, that your watch has shared the fate of my pocket-book."

"It looks like it," admitted Mr. Horsfall, gloomily; then his face cleared a little. "I'll stop that cheque," he said; "we shall catch him that way. I will write to the manager to-night."

The letter was duly written and posted, but circumstances for once were against the sacred cause of justice.

A dense fog delayed the bank-secretary's arrival at his post the next morning till half-an-hour after his usual time, and while Mr. Horsfall's letter lay unopened, amidst the pile of correspondence on the manager's table, his cheque was presented by a well-dressed young man, who received payment across the counter in gold.

Though a fresh reward was offered, coupled with a significant hint that no inconvenient questions would be asked, nothing more was heard of Lord Sprintham's gift. It had gone, most probably, as Sergeant Troyle had suggested, into the melting-pot, and not all the efforts of Mr. Horsfall, backed by the assistance of the Detective Department, could bring it back.

LASHED TO THE TOPMAST.

STRANGER to Canada, I think you said? First visit to Ontario? Well, you're heartily welcome to Indian Creek. Take a chair on the verandah till dinner's ready—we dine early in these New World parts.

Fine farm? Well, yes; Indian Creek is a nice place, if I do own it. All, as far as you can see—grass-land, corn-fields, woods, and creeks—all belong to it.

Stock, too—they call it the best-stocked farm in Ontario, I believe, and I dare say they're right, and yet I came to Canada twelve years ago, without even the traditional half-crown in my trousers' pocket. You look surprised. Would you like to hear the story? There's a good half-hour to dinner time yet, and it's a story I never tire of telling, somehow.

I began life as the son of a village carpenter in the south of England. You know that class pretty well, I dare say, and what a gulf was fixed between me and the vicar of the parish. And yet—and yet—from the time she was seven years old and I eleven, and she fell down in the dusty road outside the carpenter's shop and cried, and I picked her up, and smoothed the little crumpled pinafore, and kissed the dust out of her golden curls, I loved but one girl in the world, and that was the vicar's daughter, Winny Branscome.

Madness, you say. Well, perhaps so, and yet a man is but a man, and a woman a woman; and love comes, whatever one may do.

There's no class distinction recognised by childhood, and we were playmates and friends till she went to boarding school. If Miss Winny had had a mother, no doubt things would have been very different; but we were alike in never having known a woman's care; and the old vicar was blind to everything but his theological treatises.

But when she came back from the London boarding school, a beautiful young lady, all smiles and laces and little lovely ways—then I knew.

I had tried my best to study and work, and make myself more like the men she would meet; but what can a lad in an English village do?

I just had enough education to make every other lad in the place hate me, and beside the men in her world I suppose I cut an astonishing figure.

Yet the love of her was so beyond all else in me, that made hopeless as I felt it, I had no power over myself; and the first time I met her alone in the woods—she avoided me I saw, and I had to wait for a chance—I told her the whole story, and waited for the answer. She grew scarlet—a rush of colour that dyed her fair, sweet face—then deathly white.

"Dick," she said, and she trembled from head to foot, "you know it can never, never be; you know you are wrong even to dream of such a thing. Some girls would think it an insult—I know you better, but if my father heard of this he would say you had abused his kindness to you; he would never forgive you. Forget your madness." And she ran from me.

I let her go. I had seen the blush and the tremor, and I guessed that if I had been Mr. Loftus, the young squire, instead of Dick Hawtry, the carpenter's son, her answer might have been different.

A great resolve sprang up in my soul, and I took a solemn oath in those June woods. That very night I sold the old shop (my father was dead, and I had taken to the business), and with the money I bought an outfit, and started at once for Canada.

It was pretty tough work at first; but I worked like a galley-slave—starved, and pinched, and saved, and never spent a penny on myself, except for the books I sat up half the night to read and study.

Well, in this country the man who works and doesn't drink is sure to get on, and I had a mighty purpose in my head. By-and-bye I bought some land dirt cheap, and sold it for three times what I gave for it. Then I began to make money fast.

I should call my luck wonderful if I believed in luck, and didn't prefer to think I was helped by a Power far abler than my own. At last, ten years to the very day after I set foot on Canadian soil, I bought Indian Creek Farm, and began to build this house, till the neighbours thought my good fortune had turned my brain; for I fitted it up and furnished it for a lady, down to the little rocking-chair by my study table, and a work-basket with a tiny gold thimble in it.

And when all was finished, I took the first ship for Liverpool.

Ten years builds a city over here. It doesn't make much change in a Devonshire village. The very gates were still

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high off their hinges, as I left them; only the people were a little older and a trifle more stupid, and there was a new vicar.

Old Mr. Branscome had been dead six months—died very poor, they told me; there was nothing left for Miss Winny. My heart gave one great leap when I heard that. And Miss Winny? Oh, she had gone governessing with some people who were just off to Canada, and the ship sailed to-morrow from Liverpool.

The Liverpool express never seemed to crawl so slowly before. I got there to find every berth taken on board the *Antarctic*, and the captain raging at the non-appearance of two of the crew. Without a moment's pause I offered for one of the vacant places.

I was strong as a horse, and active enough, and, though the captain eyed me rather askance—I had been to a fashionable tailor on my way through London—he was too glad to get me to ask any questions.

So I sailed on the ship with my girl, little as she knew it. I saw her the first day or two looking so pale and thin that she was like the ghost of her old self, and yet sweeter to my eyes than ever before. The children she had charge of were troublesome little creatures, who worried and badgered her till I longed to cuff them well.

We had an awful passage. It was late in November, an early winter, and the cold was intense. It blew one continuous gale, and some of our machinery was broken, and we could not keep our course.

As we drew near this side of the Atlantic, we got more and more out of our bearings, and at last the fogs told us we were somewhere off the banks of Newfoundland, but where no one was quite sure. It seemed to me it had all happened before, or I had dreamed it or read it. At all events, it was hardly a surprise to me, when on the tenth night, just after midnight, the awful crash and shock took place—a sensation which no one who has not felt it can imagine in the least—and we knew that the *Antarctic* had struck.

It is a fearful thing, if you come to think of it—a great steamer filled with living souls in the full flow of life and health, and in one moment the call coming to each of them to die.

Before you could have struck a match the whole ship was in a panic—cries, terror, confusion, agony. Oh, it was awful! I trust never to see such a sight again. I made my way through it all as if I had neither eyes nor ears, and got to the state-room I had long ago found out was the one which belonged to my girl.

"Winny!" I cried, "come out! Make haste! There is not a moment to lose!"

The door opened as I spoke, and she stood just within, ready dressed, even to her little black hat. The cabin light had been left burning by the doctor's orders, and it fell full on me as I stood there in my sailor's jersey and cap. I wondered if she would know me. I forgot the danger we were in—forgot that death was waiting close at hand—forgot that the world held anyone but just her and me.

"Dick!" she cried; "oh, Dick, Dick!" and she fell forward in a dead faint on my shoulder.

All my senses came back then, and I lifted her up and ran for the deck. A great fur-lined cloak had been dropped by the door of the ladies' cabin. There was no light now, but I stumbled over it as I ran. I snatched it up, and carried it with me.

Up above all was in the wildest chaos—the boats over-filled and pushing off, the ship settling rapidly, people shouting, crying, swearing. One hears tales of calmness and courage often enough at such times which make one's heart glow as one reads them; but there was not much heroism shown in the wreck of the *Antarctic*.

The captain behaved splendidly, and so did some of the passengers; but the majority of them and the crew were mad with terror, and lost their heads altogether.

I saw there was not a chance for the overcrowded boats in that sea, and I sprang for the rigging. I was not a second too soon; a score of others followed my example, and with my precious burden I should not have had a chance two minutes later.

As it was I scrambled to the topmast, and got a firm hold there. Winny was just coming to herself. I had wrapped her round like a baby in the fur cloak, and with my teeth I opened my knife to cut a rope which hung within reach. With this I lashed her to me, and fastened us both to the topmast.

The ship sank gradually; she did not keel over, or I should not be telling you the story now; she settled down, just her deck above water; but the great seas washed over it every second, and swept it clean. The boats had gone!

One or two of the crew, floating on loose spars, were picked up afterwards—no more. The rigging was pretty full, at least in the upper part; down below, the sea was too strong. The captain was near me. I felt glad to think he had been saved—he was not a coward, like some of the others.

How long was the longest night you ever knew? Multiply that by a thousand and you will have some idea of that night's length. The cold was awful; the spray froze on the sheets as it fell; the yards were slippery with ice. I stamped on Winny's feet to keep them from freezing. Did you not notice that I limp a little? I shall walk lame as long as I live. Sometimes there was a splash in the dark waters below, as some poor fellow's stiffened hold relaxed, and he fell from his place in the rigging. There was not a breath of wind—nothing but the bitter, bitter fog.

Death stared us in the face; we seemed to live ages of agony in every minute, and yet, will you believe me, all that seemed little in comparison to the thought that, after all the struggles and the sorrows, after all those ten weary years, I had my girl in my arms at last!

She had pulled one corner of the cloak round my neck (I stood on a level just below her), and her hand lay there with it—it was the hand that warmed me more than the cloak—and her cheek rested against my own.

Often I thought its coldness was the coldness of death, and almost exulted in the thought that we should die together.

And then I would catch the murmur of the prayer she was uttering for us both, and knew that life was there still, and hope lived too.

Well, well! Why should I dwell on such horrors, except to thank the mercy that brought us through them all? Day dawned at last, and there was the shore near by, and soon rockets were fired and ropes secured, and one by one the half-dead living were drawn from their awful suspension between sky and sea, and landed safe on shore.

They had to take Winny and me together, just as we were, and even then they had hard work to undo the clasp of my stiffened arms about her. I knew nothing then; not for long after. And it is wonderful that Winny was the first to recover, and that it was she who nursed me back to life and reason.

And how did I ask her to marry me? Upon my word, now you ask me, I can't remember that I ever did. That seemed utterly unnecessary, somehow.

Somehow I was glad it was so; glad my girl had taken me, in my cap and jersey, for a common sailor, and yet loved the old Dick through it all; glad she never dreamed I was owner of Indian Creek Farm, and the richest man in this end of Ontario, and had wealth and position higher than Mr. Loftus, the young squire at home.

The people she was with had all gone down on that awful night; she had no one in the world but me. We were married at Montreal—and the captain of the *Antarctic* gave her away—and then I brought her home to Indian Creek.

To see her face when she saw the rocking chair, and the work-basket, and the thimble! Heaven bless her!

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THE OUTLAWS OF THE AIR.

By GEORGE GRIFFITH,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," &c.

SUMMARY.

MAX RENAULT—leading spirit of Anarchist Autonomie Group No. 7, who has joined the Utopians (a Socialistic colony on an island in the South Pacific) in order to steal the air-ship they are building, which he succeeds in doing.

FRANZ HARTOG—a German engineer, in league with Renault, who steals a very fast torpedo-boat destroyer from the Russian Government to levy blackmail on the Atlantic.

SIR HARRY MILTON—a wealthy young English nobleman, who by chance comes across the island of Utopia in his yacht, the *Calypso*, and subsequently devotes the whole of his fortune to hunting down Renault and Hartog.

HERBERT WYNDHAM—a lieutenant in the British Navy who is travelling with Sir Harry for the benefit of his health, and who determines to resign his commission and couple his energies with those of Sir Harry in destroying the Anarchists, on account of the fact that he has been stabbed by Renault when the latter attempts to carry off Violet in the air-ship.

FREDERICK AUSTEN—the inventor of the air-ship, who shares its secret with Edward Adams, Dr. Edwards, and Ambrose Millar, three other Utopians.

FRANK MARKHAM—the young captain of the Utopian yacht, *Mermaid*.

VIOLET MILTON—Sir Harry's sister, and Lieutenant Wyndham's sweetheart, is fearfully injured by throwing herself out of the air-ship on which Renault has tried to carry her off.

LEA CASSILIS (alias MME. DAIL)—a member of Autonomie Group No. 7, with whom Renault is in love.

DORA MERTON—a fair Utopian, who has made an impression on Sir Harry.

LUCY SUMMERS—another fair Utopian.

Renault, after levying blackmail with Hartog on the high seas, returns to Utopia with the object of destroying the colony, but finds it deserted. After a time he goes to Europe in the air-ship *Vengeur*, and together with Lea Cassilis visits the Criterion Theatre, London, where he is recognised by Sir Harry, and Lieutenant Wyndham, who effect his capture.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A SCENE AT BOW STREET.

THE arrest of Max Renault occurred at a few minutes past eleven, and before midnight the news—embellished, of course, by the wildest rumours and exaggerations—had spread far and wide over London, and had been flashed over the wires, not only to the provinces, but to the Continent and America as well.

Some accounts said that he had been arrested in the act of throwing a bomb on to the stage, and that it was only on his examination at the police-court that the real importance of the capture had been discovered. Others, again, said that the now famous air-ship herself had descended in Hyde Park, and had been captured with all hands on board; while yet a third rumour said that she was still at large and had gone to attack Windsor Castle out of revenge for her captain's arrest. The true facts were, however, as they were set forth at the end of the last chapter. Renault offered no resistance, and did not even utter a word of protest as soon as he saw that he was fairly in the toils. All he said was confined to a couple of sentences addressed to Sir Harry and that was:

"I am not going to deny my identity; I only wish to say that Mrs. Dail had, of course, not the slightest idea of it. I hope that, as a gentleman, you will see that she suffers as little inconvenience as possible."

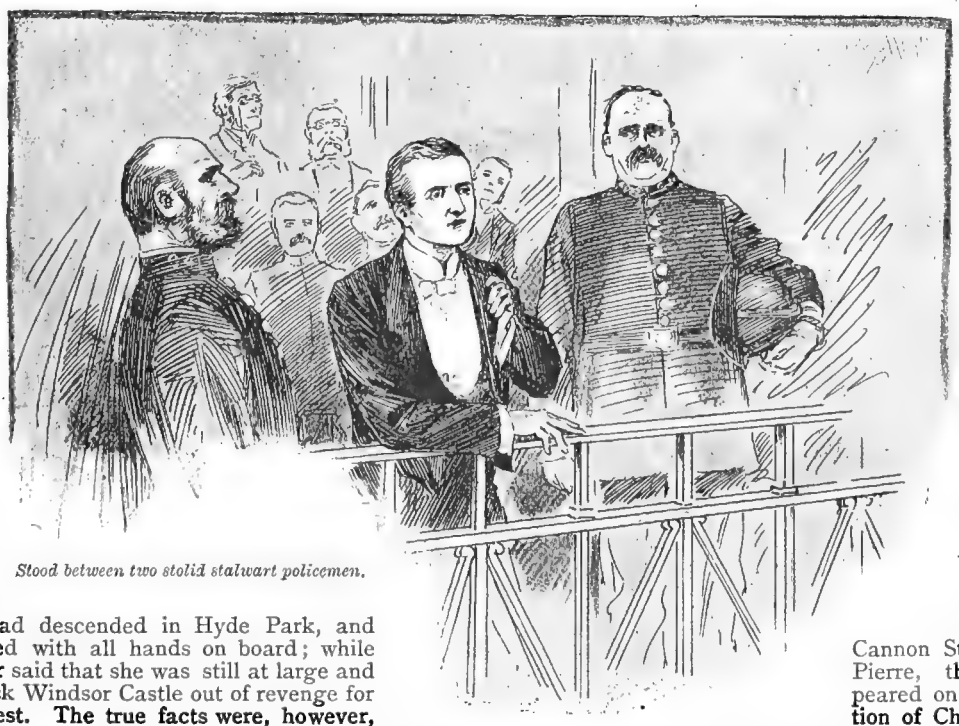
Sir Harry bowed in reply and at once offered his arm to Lea, who took it, and, after one brief frightened glance at Max between the two policemen, she went out with him, saying as she did so:

"What an awful thing!—and, would you believe it, Sir Harry, I have almost been silly enough to allow that man to persuade me to marry him. What an escape! Ugh! it makes me cold all over to think of it. Please get me a cab. I'm staying at the Métropole; my maid will be there waiting for me, and I shall get back to Paris first thing in the morning.

"No, please don't trouble to come with me. Really I would rather not. I shall be quite safe and——well, you see, I left the hotel with one gentleman, as he called himself, and it would hardly do to go back at this time of night with another, would it? Those hotel people do talk so. Thanks, this will do nicely. Good-night, and a thousand thanks for your kindness!"

She waved her hand to him from the cab, in farewell, and he called another and drove off to Bow Street to join Wyndham and his two friends. Lea drove to the Métropole, had her valise and Max's brought down, paid her bill, called another cab, and drove off at once to Charing Cross.

As she gave the direction, a man who had been lounging about the hotel entrance turned away and sauntered up the Avenue towards the station. He was the man who had left the *Vengeur* with them to act as means of communication between them and the air-ship, if necessary.



Stood between two stolid stalwart policemen.

When Lea had dismissed her cab at Charing Cross, she took a ticket for Cannon Street, and the man, following close after, took one for the same place, and got into the same carriage with her. She managed to find an empty first-class compartment, and by the time the train reached Cannon Street she had given her companion an account of what had happened, and a lengthy and minute message to Taxil. At Cannon Street they parted. Pierre, the sailor, disappeared on foot in the direction of Cheapside, and Lea got into a cab and drove to Aldersgate Street station.

There she watched the cabman out of sight, took a ticket for Farringdon Street, and then, leaving the station, got in to another cab and told the man to drive her to an address in Westbourne Terrace where, three-quarters of an hour later, she was telling the story of Max's arrest to Rolland and his wife.

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The next morning there was hardly anything on the newspaper placards but the great black letters which announced the event of which all England was already talking: the unexpected and almost grotesquely easy capture of the famous Anarchist and captain of the still more famous air-ship, which, as all the world knew, had destroyed, single-handed, three powerful cruisers and the same number of torpedo boats, and captured the aeroplane *Britannia* in mid-air to boot.

When Max was brought before Sir John Bridge at Bow Street at ten o'clock the next morning not only was the Court packed to suffocation but Bow Street itself was filled with an anxious, excited crowd, bent on getting a glimpse of those who had played the chief part in the capture of the prisoner. As Sir Harry and his friends drove up the crowd parted and cheered them as they went through. Outside reporters took snap shots at them as they entered the court and rushed off to have them reproduced to embellish the sensational narratives of their adventures in Utopia and on the Atlantic which the nimble fingers of hundreds of compositors were already setting up to form a sequel to the police court proceedings.

The proceedings themselves were of the simplest possible character, but they were none the less interesting on that account. When Max was brought into the dock he stood leaning on the rails in front, between the two stolid, stalwart policemen who guarded him, with an unconcern that could not have been more absolute if he had been a spectator watching the most trivial of cases. He politely but firmly refused all offers of legal aid, and with equal politeness disregarded the magistrate's warning that anything he said might be used against him at the Assizes if he were sent for trial.

First Lieutenant Wyndham, then Sir Harry, then Captain Maxwell and Lieutenant Pelham appeared in succession in the witness-box and told what they knew of the accused, his merciless crimes and his extraordinary exploits. The quietly-told, circumstantial narratives were spoken in the midst of a breathless silence which was broken for the first time when Sir Harry described Max's attempt to carry off his sister in the air-ship, and then all eyes were turned for a moment on to the accused, and a low murmur of irrepressible indignation ran like a fierce growl through the crowded Court.

Max simply lifted his eyebrows a little, and, with an almost imperceptible shrug of his shoulders, turned to Sir Harry and waited for him to go on with his story. When Captain Maxwell told of the destruction of the *Devon* and described how first her men had been mown down helplessly by the storm of Maxim bullets from the air, and then how the shells had riddled her decks, set her interior on fire, and at last exploded her boilers, the crowd in the Court moved uneasily as they sat or stood, and looked at each other with frightened, wondering eyes as much as to say:

"If that is possible what would happen to us if the air-ship came above the Court just now?"

Max saw this too and smiled. It was exactly the effect that he desired to be produced. Last came Lieutenant Clinton, and described the ill-fated expedition of the *Britannia* in detail, from the rescue of Captain Maxwell and his two companions in the sinking *Devon*, to the time when Taxil set them free after Peter Jackson had fired his momentous shot. Now, for the first time Max seemed to show a real living interest in what was going on. He followed every word with the minutest attention, looking alternately from the witness to the magistrate, and as soon as Pelham had stood down he said very quietly:

"Is it permitted for me to say anything now?"

"If you have anything to say," replied Sir John, "or if you have any reason to give why I should not commit you for trial, as I at present intend to do, I am of course bound to hear you, but I must again warn you, as you have refused the protection of any legal adviser, that anything you may have to say is, under the circumstances, more likely to do you harm than good.

"You are accused of the most terrible crimes, and, so far as this Court is concerned, the evidence against you is more than sufficient, seeing that you have already admitted your identity. It is my duty to advise you to say nothing now, but to take steps to engage proper legal assistance and then follow your counsel's advice implicitly."

"I am obliged to you for your advice, Sir," said Max in a low, even tone, which seemed strangely loud in the breathless stillness of the Court, "but at the same time I am quite prepared to take the risk of disregarding it. I care as little for your laws as I do for the assistance of a highly respectable lawyer who would only want hiring to defend even such a criminal and enemy of society as I have no doubt these good people here think me.

"We are at war, I and the society you represent. The last turn of the game has been in your favour. I and my people spared the lives of these gentlemen who have given evidence against me—evidence which I suppose is quite enough to hang me if you only have the power to do it. That shows how unwise it is to be too merciful in warfare.

"Still, I must compliment them, if not upon their gratitude, at least upon their moderation and their accuracy. I have listened carefully to everything they've said, and I have the pleasure of saying that it is all true. And now, Sir, you have given me well-meant advice; permit me to give you some in return. You say you intend to commit me for trial. That means, I suppose, that I shall be locked up in your cells till I make my next appearance at the Old Bailey. There the form of trial will be gone through, and I shall be condemned to death in the usual way.

"You will not hang me because you can't, but you will try to do so at your peril. I am stronger than the law, and if the law tries to injure me it will get the worst of it. I am alone here, but there is a power behind me which can and will exact such a penalty, even for the temporary inconvenience which you may put me to, that the wisest thing you could do would be to take steps to insure my liberation and safety. You have heard something of what that power can do. It will do nothing till sentence of death has been passed upon me. I need say no more, and, therefore, Sir, if you wish to send me for trial do so."

"I am stronger than the law."

As he finished his audacious speech Max stared straight at the magistrate and, without moving a muscle of his countenance, waited for his reply. It came, curt and sharp.

"You have outraged the laws of society and this country, and those laws will be vindicated without regard to any possible risk. You have been allowed to speak, and you have made a very foolish speech, in spite of its bravado, which in all human probability has finally sealed your fate. You are committed to take your trial at the Assizes which will be opened on Monday next, on the double charge of piracy and murder on the high seas. Let the prisoner be removed."

Then the tension which had held the crowd silent broke, and as Max was marched from the dock between the two policemen there was a rustle and a movement of feet and a low hoarse murmur through which angry exclamations broke as everyone thronged forward to get the last glimpse of him as he disappeared through the prisoners' door. Then as it closed behind him the Court slowly emptied of all save those whose duty keep them there. No one had any interest for the other cases that were coming on. There was only one topic for the public of London that day and no one cared to talk or hear or read of anything else.

In less than an hour the newspaper offices were pouring out special editions containing fuller and fuller reports until every word that had been spoken during the proceedings was set forth with the most minute accuracy. It was upon this

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that Max had counted when he made his speech to the magistrate. It was by no means so foolish as Sir John Bridge had honestly thought it to be.

Max knew that every word would be printed by the newspapers and he deliberately used them for the purpose of conveying his instructions to Taxil and the crew of the *Vengeur*. Those instructions were simply that the *Vengeur* was to keep out of the way, and nothing was to be done until sentence of death had been passed upon him. Then, by some means, which he trusted to them to devise, he was to be rescued, and after that, or if the attempt failed, vengeance was to be taken for his arrest or death as the case might be.

Soon after nightfall that evening Taxil dropped the *Vengeur* to the ground in a lonely glade in the centre of Epping Forest, and found Pierre waiting for him there by appointment with a bundle of newspapers under his arm. That was Tuesday evening. On Thursday morning London woke up to find posted in a hundred different places—on the walls of the Law Courts, the Government offices, the base of Nelson's column in Trafalgar Square, the Bank of England, the gates of Buckingham Palace, the Marble Arch, and even the terrace of the House of Commons—a small, red placard about eighteen inches square, of which the following is a copy:—

TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ENGLAND
AND THE
PEOPLE OF LONDON.

You are hereby warned that if Max Renault, at present in prison awaiting your so-called trial for murder and piracy, is condemned to death, the sentence will be executed upon you and your property. If it is carried out on him the vengeance exacted will be taken first on your Queen and Royal Family, and then upon the members of your Houses of Parliament, your judges and your lawyers, and after them upon yourselves generally. If Max Renault is placed alone and free on the gallery of the north Tower of the Crystal Palace at midnight on Saturday, London will be spared; if not, what is written here will be done at the proper time.

Signed, for the Anarchist Central Executive,
RAOUL TAXIL,
In command of the air-ship *Vengeur*.

A small red placard.

CHAPTER XXX.

SENTENCE OF DEATH.

THE impression produced on the collective mind of London by this audaciously worded poster may be safely left to the imagination of the reader. How in some quarters it excited derision and in others panic; how the timorous heard the news of it with dread, and how the secret enemies of Society read it with a smile on their lips and potential murder in their hearts; how the penny newspapers published leading articles ranging in tone from the alarmist speculations of the *Daily News* to the easy, if wholly insincere, banter of the *Daily Telegraph;* and how the halfpenny papers vied with each other in a contest of imagination and mendacity which stopped at nothing from the publication of entirely fictitious correspondence with non-existent Anarchists to an interview with the captain of the air-ship and author of the placard.

All this was visible on the surface, and so far differed but little, save in degree, from any of the thousand and one scares and sensations which had for many years been the amusement of the public and the livelihood of the journalist. But beneath this there was another feeling, a feeling which no one could express since no one had ever experienced it before.

There was no denying that the air-ship was in existence, or that her destructive powers were nothing short of appalling—her exploits in the Atlantic had conclusively proved that, and if she could destroy in swift succession three heavily-armed warships, what would she be able to do against a defenceless town? Granted that she made the threatened attack, what would its effects be like? Where and how would the blow be struck? Upon whom would the impending death that would be floating in the skies fall?

There would be no respect of persons. The Speaker in the chair of the House of Commons would be as much exposed as the beggar in the street. In a word London was confronted with a new terror—the terror of the unknown, and no matter what was said or printed in public, every reasonable man felt in his heart that the placard was no empty boast, and that the danger was a very real one.

The five days that elapsed between the proceedings at Bow Street and the trial of Max Renault for his life at the Old Bailey passed amidst ever-growing excitement and ever-spreading uneasiness, but the red placard had been the last sign made by the Anarchists.

The demand for the release of Max had, of course, been ignored—as his friends apparently expected it would be, since, as far as was known, they had not even come to the appointed place. Naturally, too, the newspapers informed them that this would be the case. Neither on land nor in the air had a trace of the *Vengeur* been seen, though millions of eyes were looking anxiously for her.

Max himself preserved an aspect of absolute indifference to the fate that appeared so certain. He declined all legal aid in the preparation of his defence, if he had any, and communicated with no one outside the walls of Holloway. Lea had reappeared in Paris two days after his arrest; and then, hearing that an outcry was being made against the English police for allowing her to go out of the country unquestioned, she at once returned to London, put up at the Métropole, and communicated with Scotland Yard, saying that if she could be of any service to the prosecution she was ready to give what evidence she could.

This had led to an interview with one of the heads of the Criminal Investigation Department, in which she managed to befog and mislead the official so utterly that, on his report, it was decided not to call her, it being, doubtless rightly, considered that there was more than enough evidence to hang Renault several times over, had that been possible or desirable.

As for any connection between him and the wealthy and fascinating idol of half Paris which could be construed to her disadvantage, such an idea had never seemed to enter

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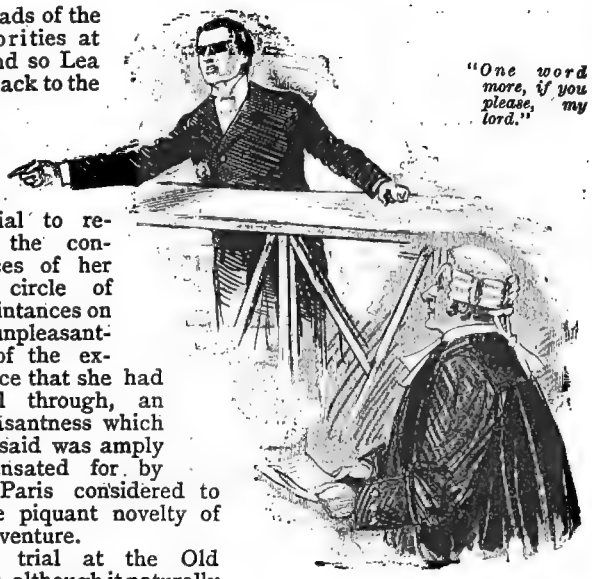
the heads of the authorities at all, and so Lea went back to the Rue Vernet before the trial to receive the condolences of her large circle of acquaintances on the unpleasantness of the experience that she had passed through, an unpleasantness which some said was amply compensated for by what Paris considered to be the piquant novelty of the adventure.



"One word more, if you please, my lord."

The trial at the Old Bailey, although it naturally excited an interest that was literally world-wide, was in itself almost devoid of sensational incident. As a matter of fact there was no question to try, since the prisoner had already admitted that the fatal evidence against him was true. When he was asked whether he pleaded "Guilty" or "Not guilty" he replied in a low, clear tone:

"Not guilty."

"Then are we to understand," said the judge, "that you do not adhere to the statement you made before the magistrate, and that you have evidence to call in your own defence?"

"I have no evidence to offer," replied Max, "and what I said in the police-court I am prepared to say here."

"But that contradicts your plea of not guilty," exclaimed the judge. "The same witnesses that appeared against you before the magistrate will be called here to-day and will give the same evidence. In the police-court you voluntarily admitted that that evidence was true, and yet you have just pleaded 'Not guilty.'

"I can hardly think that a man of very considerable intelligence, as you appear to be, standing in the presence of a court that is about to try him for his life, could find it possible to indulge in a mere play upon words. It is greatly to be regretted that you did not employ counsel, as I understand you could well afford to do, and, even if not, counsel would have been provided by the Crown. At any rate, you would have been spared the commission of an absurdity which, under the present circumstances, is something more than painful."

"My lord," replied Max, in a tone that took all respect out of the form of address. "I plead 'Not guilty' because I am charged with what you call murder and piracy, and to that plea I shall adhere. I and my comrades have as much right to make war, if we can, upon this country as this country has to make war on Russia. I care nothing for the sophistry which calls it war in the case of the nation and murder or piracy in the case of the individual.

"I fought the vessels which I destroyed fairly, and when some members of their crews fell into my hands I treated them honourably, much more honourably, in fact, than they treated me. Their lives were in my hand, and I let them go; for that I was fired upon, wounded in two places, and almost killed. If I had killed them when I had them defenceless, I should have felt bound to plead guilty to the charge of murder—supposing it could have been brought against me, as it could not have been."

Great and all as was the horror which Renault's crimes had inspired the whole of civilised humanity, there was yet something in the spectacle of this solitary man, confronting the sternest, though the most impartial tribunal in the world, disdaining all outside aid, and literally pronouncing his own condemnation beforehand rather than condescend to take advantage of a quibble or an untruth, which produced a marked impression on everyone in the crowded court.

The most stolid of the jurymen could not resist the suggestion of romance with which the whole situation was so pregnant, and even the judge's voice when he next spoke had something less in it of that tone of scornful toleration which is usually used from the Bench to those who are unable or unwilling to purchase the assistance of a professional advocate.

"It is no part of my duty to discuss such a question as that with you. I am here to interpret and enforce the laws of England as they stand, and, according to those laws, the offences for which you are about to be tried are capital offences, and there is an end of it. As a matter of form I will accept your plea of 'Not guilty,' and, therefore, the trial will proceed. Mr. Maudesley, I believe you open for the Crown."

As the leading counsel for the prosecution rose to his feet, amidst a faint rustle of garments and a low half-repressed murmur of anticipation, Max made an expressive gesture with his hands, and said in a slightly higher tone than he had used before:

"One word more, if you please, my lord. After what I said in the police-court, and after what you have just said here, this trial can only be a formality which will be very nearly a farce. I am in no humour to assist at an entertainment for these people here."

As he said this he jerked his thumb contemptuously towards those parts of the court which were packed with fashionably dressed men and women who had used the most strenuous endeavours to get places for the grim drama that they expected to see.

"Nor," he continued with an added note of contempt in his voice, "do I wish to be bored with the ready-made sentiment of this learned gentleman whom I could have hired to defend me if I had chosen. To save time and trouble, therefore, I will anticipate the foregone conclusion and withdraw my plea of 'Not guilty.'

"I did everything that your witnesses would swear I did, and I only regret now that I didn't do more, for had I done that, neither I nor they would be here to-day. I am guilty of what you call murder and piracy, and what I call war. Now, my lord, I hope I have simplified your task; but before you pass sentence of death, as I presume you will now proceed to do, let me repeat the warning——"

"Silence, Sir!" exclaimed the judge in quick stern tones which made the words ring like pistol shots through the crowded court. "You have been permitted to trifle with the law whose dignity I am here to uphold because you are undefended by counsel, and English justice condemns no man, however vile a criminal he may be, unheard, but I shall not permit you to insult it by the threats which you call warnings.

"You have pleaded guilty to a series of crimes and outrages which have caused the sacrifice of hundreds of lives. Your own life is therefore forfeit to the law, and the law will take its due, no matter what the consequences may be. Even if it were in the power of you and your followers to

"That is the death sentence of London."

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lay London in ruins before sunrise to-morrow, it would still be my duty to do that which I am about to do, and I shall do it.

"Gentlemen," he continued, turning to the jury. "You have heard the prisoner withdraw his plea of not guilty, and, with a bravado and callousness utterly shocking and disgusting alike to our sense of propriety and our feelings of humanity, glory in the commission of crimes which excel all similar crimes perpetrated by the abandoned wretches among whom he seems proud to number himself. Under such circumstances, happily unparalleled in an English court of justice, there can, I conclude, be no doubt as to your verdict. Do you find the prisoner, on his own confession, guilty or not guilty of the crimes of murder and piracy on the high seas with which he stands charged in the indictment?"

For a moment there was silence so intense that the throng in the court could hear their own hearts beating and their own breath going and coming. The foreman of the jury glanced inquiringly at his colleagues. Every head was bowed in unanimous assent, and then he rose to his feet and said in a voice that he did his best to keep steady under the excitement of the moment:

"We find him 'Guilty,' my lord."

"Prisoner at the bar!" said the judge, turning to Max and taking up the fatal square of black cloth in his right hand. "You have been found guilty, on your own confession, of the crimes of murder and piracy on the high seas. It is my duty to ask you now whether you have any reason to give why sentence of death should not be passed upon you."

Max leant his folded arms on the rail of the dock and, after one quick, searching glance, first at the jury and then at the throng that packed the court, looked the judge full in the face, and said with a sneer that he made no attempt to disguise:

"Since that will also be sentence of death on those who are my enemies, I have neither reason nor objection. Say on, my lord!"

Then he stood and, still with unshrinking eyes and smiling lips, watched the judge put on the black cap and heard him say the solemn words which, unless some miracle should be interposed to save him, consigned him to a shameful death and a felon's grave.

"—— and may the Lord have mercy on your soul!"

The last of the fatal words had scarcely died away in the hush that had fallen on the now breathless throng, when Max suddenly straightened himself up and, before the warders could stop him, cried in a loud, clearly-ringing voice:

"That is the death sentence of London! *That* for your law and your justice. Fichtre!" And with that he snapped his fingers in the faces of judge and jury, and the next moment was hurried from the dock by the two warders.

(To be continued.)

HER BOY.

AND now he was dead—her boy, the only one! She could not sleep; she could not think of anything else. She was conscious only of a feeling of inexpressible loneliness; all the sunshine and warmth had vanished, leaving a cold, dreary void. As she now sat by the side of the little bed, staring into space, so had she sat for hours—motionless, as rigid and white as the boy who lay there before her. He had been her second self—her all, her idol. And now he was gone!

Two children had been born to her and had died within a few weeks of birth. When she lost the second, a dull despair took possession of her, and the doctors began to despair for her reason. Then came this one—a boy, her bonnie boy—and from that moment she lived again—lived for him.

She would not allow any paid servant to attend to him; she herself watched over him—nursed, washed, and dressed him. His cot stood near her bed, and as he slept she sat by his side and listened to his every breath. Then she worked and sewed for him; nothing was too costly or too good for him. The prettiest and sunniest room in the house was set apart and fitted up for the baby boy. She gave up visiting and stayed at home that no harm should befal him through her absence. She herself cooked his food; everything was carefully prepared and tasted.

He learnt to walk by holding her hand. She stooped and crept along the floor with him, he disarranged her hair and her dress with his chubby fingers. What did it matter? She forgot all, except that she was his *mother!*

He was a bright, intelligent little fellow. He wanted to know everything, examine everything, and she was never tired of answering his questions. She invented games and tales to amuse him; all the treasures of a richly-stored mind, hidden from everyone else, she poured out for her darling. He should be prettier and cleverer—and better—than all!

As he grew, she began to make plans for the future. He should become great and famous! Her love made her ambitious, almost greedy. She scraped and saved, and urged her husband to continual work and restless endeavour. Life must be made smooth for her boy; he must never have to slave for a living, or be at the beck and call of everybody.

He had never been ill; not for one moment had he caused her any anxiety on that head. "A splendid little fellow," the doctor called him; every limb was like iron, and supple withal. He became the best gymnast in the school; and he grew up as good-mannered, and as polite to ladies who visited his mamma as a knight of olden time. She had reason to be proud of him.

Five days ago he was in good health; now he was dead. Diphtheria. Nobody knew how he had caught the fatal disease; he had not complained of feeling ill, but had looked pale and tired. She had brought him home, and the best doctors were called in; they did not hide the fact that his life was in great danger, but she would not believe them.

"He will live," she said, shaking her head. "He will live! It would be *too* cruel to take him from me. He is the only one I have in the world!"

She never moved from his bed day or night. She laughed and joked with him, and made plans about what they would do when he was well again. They would go to the mountains, and papa would buy him a pony, a pretty little brown pony. He had wanted a pony for a long time; he smiled at the realisation of his heart's desire, his whole face beamed with delight as he said: "Good papa!"

She left the boy for a moment to draw aside the curtains and let in the sunshine—he liked the sun so much. She turned to him with a smile.

"Do you like that, my de a

But he did not answer. "Good papa" had been his last words; he had died with the beaming expression produced by her promise.

She would not believe it. She threw herself upon the bed, pressed her lips against his, shook him, and called to him. "My boy! my boy!"

Dead!

She sat by the bedside unconscious of all that was taking place outside. She knew not whether it was day or night, whether the time was passing or standing still. Someone opened the door and came in softly; a tall, spare man, with tired-looking eyes, and an expression of deep grief on his cadaverous face.

"Will you not lie down, Elizabeth?"

"No!" she answered in a hard tone. "I cannot sleep. I will stay here."

He stepped to the head of the bed and bent over his son's body; he was going to kiss the still, wax-like face, when she uttered a cry:

"Don't touch him! Don't touch him, I say!"

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He looked at her with his tired, sorrowful eyes. "Poor girl," he said; and went away as softly as he had come.

Alone she watched by her dead. In an adjoining room she heard her husband's footsteps as he paced up and down, up and down, the monotonous tread interrupted occasionally by what sounded like a groan. Then the sounds ceased.

He was much older than she; a quiet, earnest man, whose profession occupied a great deal of his time. She had married him at the wish of her parents, and because she knew him to be trustworthy. The marriage had not been unhappy; he had always been very good to her, but she had been much alone. When this boy came and lived, she was happy. And her husband——?

She did not see much of him. He came home in the afternoon, and they had dinner together—except when she was busy with the boy, when he dined alone. And after the meal he retired to his room, and worked hard. He had a cold, narrow room at the back of the house; he had given up the one orginally occupied by him, because the doctor had said that it was the brightest and healthiest room in the house.

He never complained, and always gave way to his wife in everything; if the thing pleased her, that was sufficient. Year by year she was able to put by a respectable sum for the boy out of the liberal allowance that he was able to make to her by his constant work, and she looked forward to the time when she would be able to give the boy a grand start in life. Her love for the child was all-engrossing, and her husband was but a secondary consideration. It was always "*My* boy." But John never complained. She was usually asleep when he went out in the morning, and at night when she had a few minutes with him, her conversation was all about the boy's doings.

When the child was about two years old, his interesting ways caused John to go to the nursery on several occasions. The child was delighted to see the earnest-looking man who jumped him up and down, allowed him to "ride-a-cock-horse," and pull his whiskers. But the mother became impatient at games in which she had no part. Why should the child be so pleased?

At last she could bear it no longer. She called him to her, ut the boy refused to leave his father. A pang went through er heart; she spoke angrily to him, and the little fellow began to cry. His father sat him down gently and bade him go to his mother.

John did not go to the nursery again, and she was glad. John had his profession and his fellow-workers; she had only her boy. She blamed herself for her jealousy, but it was stronger than she. When her boy went to school she learnt Latin secretly so that *she* could help him and he would not be obliged to go to his father for assistance.

"Good papa!" She grudged him even that; the words struck her to the heart. "Look at me just once and say 'Mother,'" she moaned. It seemed to her that she could have borne the loss more easily if his last words had been for her. But he was dead, and his sweet lips would never say another word. "Good papa!"

Why did the words torment her so? They drew her mind from the dead to the living, to the elderly man in the back room who was sorrowing for his son. She had driven him away! "Don't touch him!" she had cried aloud; and in heart she had added: "He is mine, *mine!*"

The awful selfishness of her motherly love now became suddenly clear to her, and she shuddered.

How peaceful the boy looked! Several times, as the candle flickered and shone more brightly for a moment, and the light fell upon the dead boy's face, it seemed to her as if he smiled and his lips moved—"Good papa!"

She understood it now. "Yes, yes, he is a good papa! I will go and fetch him!"

The father sat in his old armchair, his face buried in his hands. The room was dusty and untidy, the picture of neglect. She had entered the room quietly, and he had not noticed her.

"John," she said softly.

He looked up quickly, with a vain attempt to hide his tears.

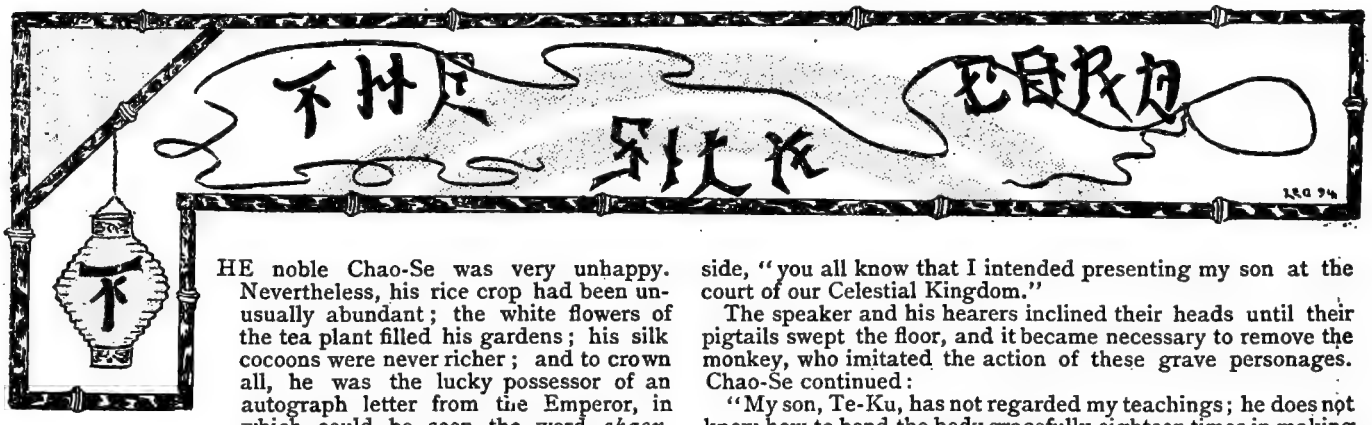
"What is it, dear? Can I do anything for you?"

His first thought was of her. Sympathy and compassion filled her heart now. She stretched out her arms to him. He hesitated, not understanding the movement; but the look in her eyes explained all, and he clasped her to his breast.

"My wife, my poor, dear wife!"

There, close to his heart, the first tears came to relieve her, and she sobbed bitterly. When the paroxysm was passed, she looked up at him and said softly and humbly:

"Come with me; come and see *our* boy!"



HE noble Chao-Se was very unhappy. Nevertheless, his rice crop had been unusually abundant; the white flowers of the tea plant filled his gardens; his silk cocoons were never richer; and to crown all, he was the lucky possessor of an autograph letter from the Emperor, in which could be seen the word *chaon*, a credential of long life.

Why, then had our noble Chinee ordered the image of Fo to be belaboured with sticks, leaving a mere wreck of that deity standing amidst fragments of his former porcelain and imposing figure? And that evening, at supper, why had he disputed with his ancient cook the excellence of a magnificent dish of roast dog that all the guests had pronounced exquisite, disdained a cup of the finest Kyson tea, and paid no attention to his pet monkey in spite of all its playful caresses?

"Respected kinsmen," said Chao-Se gravely, after the meal had ended, to the three venerable Chinamen squatting at his side, "you all know that I intended presenting my son at the court of our Celestial Kingdom."

The speaker and his hearers inclined their heads until their pigtails swept the floor, and it became necessary to remove the monkey, who imitated the action of these grave personages. Chao-Se continued:

"My son, Te-Ku, has not regarded my teachings; he does not know how to bend the body gracefully eighteen times in making our court bow, nor is he familiar with the unalterable forms of our celestial etiquette; he has rejected my old friend Ling's virtuous daughter, whose tiny feet could be encased in nut-shells; and, let this astonish you, dear friends, defied by Chung, whose honoured body now reposes in the tomb, he refused to disembowel himself, while his adversary expired triumphant with his body ripped open in the most approved fashion. In this disgrace I have called you together, being resolved to follow your advice as to the best means of saving the family honour."

"You should, above all, disinherit Te-Ku," said the eldest of the council.

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"And divide your possessions among us," added the second.

"And as the family honour is tarnished, a sacrifice is necessary," said the third. "You should strangle yourself, in order that the reputation of our house may not perish."

Such was the decision of the council. Chao-Se now, too late, regretted having convoked it.

. . . . . .

"What present is this you are bringing me?" asked the wife of Chao-Se, that same night, noticing that her husband had placed a small ivory box upon the table of her room.

"Beautiful and dearly beloved Tian, I have a surprise for you," replied the noble Chinee, gallantly.

Tian gathered herself up on her couch, exposing to view a pair of tiny feet, some two or three inches in length.

"You have been a good wife," continued Chao-Se kindly, "and I desire that you should figure in history as a model of virtue. Well then, the family council has decided that I must sacrifice myself to restore our lost reputation; but as I have a certificate of long life from my sovereign, it would be an act of ingratitude on my part to cut short my own existence. I have therefore selected you, dear Tian, as my substitute, that you may save our honour with the silk cord you will find in the box. I am sure you will be grateful to me for this mark of distinction and proof of my deep affection."

"Sir!" exclaimed Tian terrified, "I dare not kill myself. I am as timid as a chicken."

"Calm yourself, my dear; if you cannot do it alone, being as timid as a chicken, I'll get the cook to help you," and the noble Chao-Se embraced his wife tenderly, and withdrew from the apartment.

. . . . . .

Tian appeared calm; Kin, the cook, was uneasy.

"Dost thou wish to fly with me?" asked Tian gazing lovingly at the poor cook.

"My lady!" exclaimed he, trembling.

"To fly from a house where they do not appreciate thy roasts, to unite thyself to me and become master of my magnificent jewels."

Kin kissed the floor to express his gratitude.

"There is a way to accomplish all this. Thy master, Chao-Se, protected by the Emperor's decree, will yet live many years, during which time we shall be able to leave this earth and lose ourselves in space."

"I don't understand."

"It is very simple! I wish thee to accompany me in this journey. Take this cord and hang thyself outside the door whilst I gather up my jewels and prepare to follow thee."

Kin opened his oblique eyes in horror. Tian gave him a languishing glance.

"Good-bye," she said, "do not fail me," and pushed him gently towards the door, slipping around his neck the soft silken cord.

As Kin left the apartment he heard a noise in an adjoining room. "It must be the monkey," he said to himself, and then continued meditatively: "For two reasons I had better not kill myself: in the first place, because I have no certainty of reviving in the other world; and, secondly, because if I *do* come to life again, the mighty Fo will be able to take vengeance upon me for the beating I have given his image."

Again the noise was heard. It was not the monkey but Te-Ku who made it, robbing the treasure chest of his father. The garden window was open; the jewels showed glitteringly through the open mouth of the sack. Kin, indignant, could not do less than reproach him for his conduct, at the same time revealing to him the predicament in which he had placed the family.

Te-Ku implored him to speak lower, but Kin responded each time in a louder voice. At length the unhappy youth exclaimed, conscience-stricken: "Give me the cord; I am the true culprit, and to me should belong the sacrifice!" And making a noose in one end of the fatal cravat, he tied the other to the window frame, swung the bag of jewels to his shoulder for the expenses of the journey, and, embracing the cook affectionately, said to him:

"Go now, and leave me alone. I do not wish thee to witness my death agony."

Kin had not complete confidence in his young master, but did not dare disobey his command.

"I've got myself nicely out of that scrape," said Kin, with a sigh of satisfaction, passing his hand around his neck.

. . . . . .

The following morning at daybreak the relatives of Chao-Se, attired in white, the mourning costume of the Chinese, presented themselves at his house, prepared to render to his corpse the last tributes; but to their great surprise they found him awaiting them, also dressed in white, and maintaining a ceremonious attitude.

"What, still alive!" they exclaimed, indignantly.

Chao-Se related to them all that had occurred: his scruples, the timidity of his wife, the substitution of the cook, and the voluntary expiation of his son. The others, after an animated discussion, agreed to accept this solution of the difficulty.

"Let us go to the garden, into which nobody has yet entered," said Chao-Se, solemnly. "There we shall view the body of my unhappy son."

The committee made their way to the garden, but upon arriving at the scene of the catastrophe, were stupefied with amazement. Suspended by the silken cord, and swinging to and fro like a pendulum, was the rigid body of a monkey.

"That is not my son!" exclaimed Chao-Se, horrified.

"Sir, I saw him place the noose around his neck," replied the cook. "Without doubt the monkey has fled in the figure of your son, leaving his own image behind him. There is something of magic in this. . . . . The divine Fo is avenged!"

"No such thing," said the prospective inheritors of the estate, with decision. "It's the body of Te-Ku. Don't you see the resemblance to the father? It is his very image!"

"But, gentlemen," protested Chao-Se," defending himself, "look at that mouth!"

"It is your own, noble Chao-Se," replied the others.

"And those ears ——"

"Are identical with yours"; and in a whisper, "Remember that a victim was required!"

The distinguished Chinaman admitted at length that the body was that of his son, although certainly somewhat disfigured.

Consequently the death of Te-Ku was officially certified to, the remains were given a magnificent burial, and the family council declared the honour of the house of Chao-Se to be fully re-established.

. . . . . .

In spite of the certificate of long life, Chao-Se survived his son only a few months. Then came to take charge of the inheritance a young man who claimed to be Te-Ku, and declared that he had fled from the paternal mansion some time before, jumping from the garden window.

The case having been submitted to the highest tribunal in the land, a learned mandarin rendered the following decision:

"The death and burial of Te-Ku having been legally proven,

"No one having been missed from the house of Chao-Se on the night in question except a monkey, whose whereabouts are now unknown:

"Be it decided, therefore, that if the claimant speaks truly in regard to the flight, he can be no other than the monkey;

"And if he has failed to speak the truth he deserves to be executed with the cord that the relatives of the deceased still retain in their possession."

In this alternative Te-Ku decided to declare himself a monkey, and was forthwith handed over to a travelling mountebank.

TO OUR READERS.

In consequence of the Christmas Holidays, the next issue of SHORT STORIES will be published on Saturday, December 22nd, instead of Tuesday, December 25th. It will be our Special Christmas Week Number, and will contain five complete short stories of a seasonable nature, besides an instalment of Mr. Griffith's exciting serial profusely illustrated

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GONTRAN meets one of his friends in front of the Opera.

"You are just the person I wished to see," he remarks. "I wanted to bid you good-bye!"

"Good-bye?"

"Well! I am going away shortly. London is not fit to live in at present, and I do not understand how you, one of our set, consent to wander in these intolerable streets."

The friend bows his head and walks away somewhat humiliated. Gontran goes on his way triumphantly, announcing the great news to all his friends. One of these, little Lloyd, who is more inquisitive than the rest, asks him where he is going.

"I have not decided yet," answers Gontran.

"To a watering-place?"

"Pooh! I dream of Italy."

Little Lloyd, who wishes to find out just what is in Gontran's mind, remarks very seriously:

"They say it's a beautiful country!"

"I believe you," says Gontran ironically.

He then looks at him askance, and walks away. For fifteen days he takes pains to proclaim clamorously his departure, gives and takes commissions, and continually changes his plans.

At last, his friends, really tired of hearing always the same old story, begin to wonder when they meet him:

"How is it you have not gone yet? Still here? When do you start? Have you decided to remain?"

Gontran feels that he really must do something at once, and one evening, meeting his best friend, the Hon. Charles Seawell, remarks, "I have decided to start to-morrow."

"At last!"

"You will allow me to send you my impressions from time to time?"

"Thanks—delighted, of course."

"I authorise you to communicate an abstract of my notes to our friends of the club," adds Gontran.

"Certainly. Shall I accompany you to the station?"

"Thank you, no; it would be useless."

It would indeed have been useless, as, on the following evening, protected by the falling shadows, Gontran, with little luggage, mysteriously took a cab, directing it, not to the station, but towards the distant quarter of Stoke Newington.

There he took a room for four pounds a month in Cometa Street, a street in which one need have no fear of meeting any of the West End set. All the summer he remained there. He hired an old servant to attend to his wants, and also bought the necessary material for a large correspondence.

Eight days afterwards the Hon. Charles received a letter, of which the following is an abstract:—

"Steamship, *General Garibaldi*,
14th May, 18—.

"How beautiful the sea! How freely one breathes when surrounded by this immensity of water! Ah, my dear Charlie, how I pity you, who have to remain in that infected London. As you wish me to write all my adventures and sensations, I shall begin by remarking that I sailed from London on the *General Garibaldi*, a steamer plying between London, Genoa, Vecchia, and Naples. You know my social temperament, so that it is hardly worth while to mention that I immediately made the acquaintance of the captain by offering him cigars. Captain Austen is a dear old fellow! Going out of port the ship began to tip a little. How wretched it is to be seasick! Luckily I did not suffer long. I have not told you yet about the passengers of the *General Garibaldi*. All sorts of people! There is one girl who is enchanting—a little girl with a wealth of hair falling on her shoulders. She often looks at me, and I—Pst! I must not tell everything in a day.

"After all this talk, my dear Charlie, I stop writing to go on deck and admire the far-off lines of the Corsican coast on the blue horizon.

"Yours affectionately,
"GONTRAN.

"P.S.—You will receive this letter, as well as those which follow, through a third party who attends to my business interests in London."

A fews days afterwards a second letter came from Gontran, dated in Genoa:—

"Hold me, my friend, hold me, as I cannot restrain the great admiration which overcomes me, while I exclaim, Wonderful! delightful!—no one can imagine anything like it! Genoa is a city that does not resemble any other. It has a gulf, and oh! what a gulf! and marble everywhere, too much marble! They say the Ligures founded Genoa about seven hundred years before Christ. Later, the Romans united it to Gallia Cisalpina. After the fall of the Roman Empire it was taken and passed through the hands of different barbarous populations, until it became liege to Charles the Great. At the beginning of the fifth century, Genoa declared itself an independent city, and was governed by consuls, upheld by the senate. The people gathered in assembly on the public square, and took part in the administration.

"In 1379, the Genoese and the Venetians, who controlled the seas, began to fight each other furiously, and completely demoralised one another." (Here it may be well to remark that Gontran had, before departing for Cometa Street, bought a Baedeker Guide.)

"By the way; I have found my American girl of the steamer at Genoa. We live in the same hotel, and she is accompanied by an uncle, and two cousins with pointed teeth. I have been told that she belongs to one of the richest families of New York. The day after my arrival I began the attack. In love, I never waste time. A maid, generously bribed, has promised to convey to Miss Arabella (this is her name) a note, the triumphant result of which undertaking I patiently await."

When Gontran wrote these sweet words he had just dictated the items of his washing-list to his washerwoman, whose orthography had deeply interested him.

Thus the letters to the Hon. Charles followed one another for three months. It was a flood of rhapsody. The most wonderful and amusing adventures were described in them: Excursions in gondolas in Venice, fantastic serenades on the Lake of Como, battles with brigands, invitations to the Vatican. The last letter was dated from the foot of the crater of Vesuvius.

. . . . .

Three months later, at Ascot, a man throws himself into another man's arms:

"Charlie!"

"Gontran!"

"As you see!"

"You look wonderfully well. My best compliments for your beautifully bronzed complexion."

"Send your compliments to the sun of Naples and the breezes of Sorrento."

"Oh, yes, I know!"

"Did you receive my letters?"

"Every one of them!"

"Did they interest you?"

"They astonished me."

The Hon. Charles seems to think a minute, and then he asks with a smile:

"So you are satisfied with your trip, are you?"

"Can you ask such a question? Enthusiastic, my dear fellow!"

"If such is the case, I think you ought to pay me the rent of the room in Cometa Street, which you have unfortunately neglected to do. You see, my dear Gontran, I have only these small dividends to live on. My dear fellow, I am your landlord."

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HOW SHOULD STOUT LADIES DRESS?

Some considerable controversy has been going on in one of the American fashion magazines on this subject, started by the threatened inundation of crinolines.

Fancy a fat lady in a crinoline! Or better still, fancy ten fat ladies in ten fat crinolines, with, say, five a side in a none too fat omnibus!

The Yankee humorist says: "A fat lady can beat a fat man; she can stick a stiletto-like pin through her head till it comes out the other side and hold on her bonnet, but the fat man can't." Let's have those ten pins to complete the picture of those ten crinolines. Would we of the sterner sex not like to "lynch" the fiend who invented mountainous hats and feathers for front rows in theatres? Blondin can walk across Niagara on a tight rope, but can he walk a theatre corridor with three ladies' trains in front of him? The fashion miscreant, and the barbed wire inventor, have much to answer for. One fashion paper argues that if the portly lady adds a little slashing of light on a dark backgrouud, artistically and judiciously, it has the effect of *apparently* reducing her size by half a stone. How ludicrous all this seems! What is the seven pounds *imitation* reduction? We have known Mr. Russell, the eminent Specialist on Corpulency, reduce a lady eleven pounds in seven days, and not an *imitation* reduction, but an absolute fact, at a cost of probably less than is paid to the "faking" dressmaker. Those who are acquainted with his methods, or have read his work, "Corpulency and the Cure," can bear us out that he talks with as glib unconcern of fourteen-pound, twenty-eight pound, and even half-hundredweight reductions of unhealthy waste accumulations as a steamboat stoker would talk of coal. The dressmaker simply attempts to hide the disease—creating adipose, carried about by the unfortunate victim to obesity—whereas Mr. Russell (of Woburn House, 27, Store Street, London, W.C.) aims to remove the cause, and thus impart health. Of course, no lady likes the brute of a man who enters into a crusade against tight-lacing in a blunt common-sense way; but he is, however, right when he claims that tight stays with *embonpoint* is suicidal, especially when a few doses of a most pleasant, agreeable, and exhilarating tonic, made entirely from herbs, will reduce one's weight so easily with a corresponding improvement of health and strength, and with it that bright eye and healthy complexion which we all like to see in a lady. If our roof leaks and lets the rain in, we can shelter ourselves from it by opening an umbrella; but if we get the slater to stop the cause, he is the true benefactor, and not the umbrella maker. So it is with the reducer of fat and the dressmaker. The fair sex begin to see that he is their benefactor; he does not ruthlessly rip up the bodice, like uncouth Dr. Abernethy; he is better informed, for he actually knows that in twenty-four hours that identical inimical appendage will be in a state of subjugation. In other words, a dangerously tight lacing on Monday will be slack by Tuesday, after taking three simple doses of his mixture. "Has one to starve one's self?" asked a lady once. Not at all, for it is a singular fact that one eats more under his treatment.

It is perhaps not singular, if we investigate. A fat man is unhealthy; he is, in fact, diseased; as the disease is being cured the organs become healthy, the patient is more buoyant, and takes more exercise, and requires more food (it is also traceable to other reasons without exercise). Then, again, with stilt-like high heels, fashion—well, I think we had better drop this theme, we shall get into hot water with our fair readers; we are married. We generally get the old bachelor-editor to write on these subjects; he is not a bit afraid of women, as he calls them.

But seriously, if any lady, or gentleman, as far as that goes, wishes to reduce their weight, we commend them to Mr. Russell's work, "Corpulency and the Cure," which is published at Woburn House, Store Street, London, W.C., and only costs 4d. in stamps, post free. But to revert to the subject of crinolines, honestly we are pleased to see the really sensible and steadfast way in which ladies have made their standpoint, and we suggest that they should have a medium of their own to rule the fashions to their own liking, and not be the victims of the profit-seeking professional modiste.

DO STOUT PEOPLE LIVE LONG?

This is a question which has occupied the attention of medical authorities from time immemorial. Some argue that the lean kind take longer to shuffle off the mortal coil than their stout brethren. The statistics naturally favour this argument, and no doubt are correct to a great extent, because sufferers from obesity are more susceptible to disease in consequence of the debilitated state of the system when clogged with abnormal adipose tissue; but a curious fact has been overlooked, viz., that corpulency generally commences about the age of thirty-five to fifty, after which time it seems to decrease; therefore, before the proverbial "three score and ten" is reached, the whilom fat man is, by a natural process, again reduced to what may only be called moderate plumpness, and thus cheats the statistician. Stout persons can now, thanks to science, reduce their weight in a most extraordinarily rapid manner, without the slightest injury to their constitutions, or without resorting to those drastic remedies which only operate for a time, or by the continuance of the use of toxical drugs extending over such a period that renders it baneful to the long-suffering patient. An eminent Continental therapeutist recommends the victim to obesity to eat fat meat, while an equally eminent American prescribes lean ditto, and the stomach is to risk an accumulation of serious disorder by swallowing a pint of hot water daily, a most nauseous remedy, we should think, and not unattended with danger. The past master in the cure of corpulence is Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, London, W.C., whose book (256 pages), entitled "Corpulency and the Cure," price only 4 stamps, seems to impress us considerably, for he reduces more weight by his system than the Continental and American physicians, without any of the absurd restriction which would make life scarcely worth living. He uses simple herbs, the properties of which he seems to possess a more than usual knowledge of, and he makes but little secret of his method, so refreshing after the mystery made of most chemical and herbal concoctions of various complaints.—*Wetherby News.*

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